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ABSTRACT

Two performance instruments used in Georgia for the assessment and certification of speech language pathologists (SLPs) are described. All school SLPs are required to attain a passing score on the written Teacher Certification Test for Speech-Language Pathologists (TCT-SLP). Analysis of test results from 1982 through May, 1986 indicated that 63% of the 655 SLPs who elected to take the test passed it on their first attempt. On-the-job evaluation is assessed by the Speech-Language Pathology Assessment Instrument (SPAI). From September, 1983 through January, 1986, 144 SLPs received first assessments with the SPAI; 37% reached proficiency in all seven of the following SLP competencies: (1) demonstrates program management skills; (2) uses screening and referral techniques; (3) obtains and uses diagnostic information; (4) plans for students and maintains records; (5) uses therapy approaches and materials; (6) stimulates and interacts with students to enhance student performance; and (7) uses therapy management skills. Steps in the SPAI revision process currently underway are described. (JW)

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Quality Assurance Through Performance Evaluation of School SLPs in Georgia

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Performance-based certification became a reality for Georgia SLPs in Fall,1983. Since that time both the written Teacher Certification Test (TCT) and the on-the-job Speech-Language Pathology Assessment Instrument (SPAI) have been required of beginning SLPs in Georgia schools. The following paragraphs provide brief descriptions of the two performance instruments and a summary of certification testing results.

Teacher Certification Test

The written test, the Teacher Certification Test for Speech-Language Pathologists (TCT-SLP) is multiple choice in format and covers the broad areas of (1) fundamentals of speech and language, (2) speech and language disorders, (3) related handicapping conditions, (4) hearing impairment, and (5) program management/professional knowledge. All school SLPs are required to attain a passing score during the first year of employment. Pre-service SLP's in Georgia may take the TCT during the last quarter of their undergraduate or graduate programs. The TCT was developed by National Evaluation Systems in consultation with Georgia SLPs and is administered by the Georgia Department of Education four times a year at various sites around the state.

Teacher Certification Test Results

From 1982 through May, 1986, 655 SLPs elected to take the TCT in Speech and Language Pathology. Approximately 63% of the SLPs passed the TCT on their first attempt. An additional 11.3% passed on their second attempt, 4% on the third attempt, 1% on the fourth attempt and 1% on five or more attempts for a cumulative pass rate of 80%. Table 1 summarizes this information and indicates the number of SLPs electing to retake the test or not to retake, those failing on first or subsequent attempts, etc.

Table 2 is a summarization of veteran SLPs from the group of 655 who took the test for certificate renewal. Approximately 74% of the 198 veteran SLPs passed the TCT on their first attempt. An additional 9.7% passed on their second attempt, 1% on their third attempt, and 1% on four or more attempts for a cumulative pass rate of 85.7%.

Additional analyses were made of initial and retake results from TCT scores reported from February, 1984 through May, 1986. Test scores were analyzed according to degree level (4 years of training,

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5 or more years of training) and place of training (in-state institutions, out-of-state institutions). Place of training had no influence on success in taking the TCT. The passing rates were nearly identical for graduates of Georgia institutions (61%) and for SLPs who graduated from out-of-state institutions (59%). On the other hand, the passing rate for 5 year SLPs (masters degree) was almost double that for 4 year SLPs (bachelors degrees): Seventy-five percent (75%) of tests administered to 5 year SLPs yielded passing scores, while 45% of tests taken by 4 year SLPs resulted in passing scores.

Speech-Language Pathology Assessment Instrument

The Speech-Language Pathology Assessment Instrument (SPAI), used for on-the-job evaluation, was developed by SLPs under the aegis of the Georgia Department of Education. The SPAI is comprised of 23 indicator items which are grouped into seven competency areas. Administration, diagnostics, and therapy planning are sampled through a portfolio prepared by the beginning SLP and through an interview with the SLP (Competencies I-IV); therapy is evaluated through direct observation (Competencies V-VII). Personnel from 17 Regional Assessment Centers (RACs) coordinate all teacher certification assessments, including those for SLPs.

Prior to the beginning of the assessment, all SLPs are provided an orientation to the SPAI and the assessment process under the direction of the RACs. There are two assessment periods scheduled per school with at least 50 teaching days intervening between assessments. Within a three-year limit, an SLP has a maximum of six opportunities to demonstrate proficiency at least once on each of the seven competency areas.

The assessment is conducted by a team of four data collectors: an administrator from the SLP's school system, an RAC representative, and two master's level SLPs. Ratings assigned by the data collectors within each of the competency areas are compared to minimum performance levels previously established through statewide surveys of masters level school SLPs.

Satisfactory performance on each competency can be demonstrated in either of two ways:

1. 85 percent of the indicator ratings at or above the minimum levels on one assessment, or

2. 75 percent of the indicator ratings at or above the minimum levels over a combination of two consecutive assessments.

When either of these standards is met, the competency will be credited as completed.

Each SLP assessed receives a computer printout and detailed interpretation of the assessment results in a personal conference. Staff development opportunities and available resources will also be identified at this time. When the performance profile for each assessment period is delivered and interpreted, the applicants will be informed of their status toward completion of the requirements. Competencies which have been satisfactorily demonstrated will be credited. Remaining competencies will be addressed in the subsequent assessment(s). When all seven competencies have been satisfactorily demonstrated, the Teacher Certification Office, Georgia Department of Education, will issue the Performance-Based SLP certificate.

SPAI Certification Results

From September, 1983 through January, 1986, 144 SLPs received first assessments with the SPAI (Table 4). For this group, 37% reached proficiency on all seven competencies; 1% satisfied none of the competencies.

Information on place of training was available for 122 of the assessed SLPs, while degree level information was available for 132 of those tested. Similar percentages of SLPs trained in Georgia (34%) and those trained out-of-state (33%) completed the SPAI on their initial attempts. Completion percentages for SLPs with four-year (bachelors) and five-year (masters) degrees show markedly higher first-attempt success rates for those with the graduate degree (26% vs 46%).

Place of training continued to have no influence on mastery rates when degree levels were considered separately: Almost identical percentages of in-state and out-of-state SLPs mastered all competencies on the first attempt, regardless of whether they held four-year or five-year degrees.

SPAI results were also summarized according to the percentage of satisfactory completion of each of the seven competency areas (Table 5). Competencies I (Program Management) and VII (Therapy Management) yielded the highest mastery rates of 90% and 87% respectively; the lowest mastery rates of 63% and 60% occurred on Competencies III (Diagnostics) and IV (Plans and Records). SLPs with masters degrees from outside Georgia demonstrated the most consistent mastery rates across all of the competencies (65% - 88%), while the least consistent success levels were shown by bachelors level SLPs trained in-state (46% -92%).

Further inspection of mastery results for the individual competency areas revealed several instances in which demographic group success rates differed by 10% or more. For example, when place of training was considered, results for Competency IV (Plans and Records) were higher for SLPs trained out-of-state than for those

trained in Georgia. Conversely, results for Competency VII (Therapy Management) were higher for Georgia-trained SLPs than for SLPs trained elsewhere. Degree level showed more instances of discrepancy than did place of training. The mastery rate for five-year SLPs was at least 10% above that of four-year SLPs on Competencies III (Diagnostics), IV (Plans and Records), V (Therapy Approaches and Materials), VI (Interaction with Students), and VII (Therapy Management). Although several differences of at least 10% occurred between the demographic subgroups (degree x place of training), the most notable difference appeared for Competency III on which five-year in-state SLPs succeeded at a 25% higher rate than did their four-year, Georgia-Trained colleagues.

Statistical analysis of the dependence of results on degree level yielded a significant ($p < .05$) Chi Square value only for Competency IV. Place of training exerted no statistically significant influence on the results for individual competencies. The Chi Square procedure could not be applied to the demographic subgroups because of insufficient numbers in most subgroups.

Revision of the SPAI

The Speech Language Pathology Assessment Instrument (SPAI), currently used in certifying Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) (and reported on above), is being revised by the Georgia Department of Education through the Speech-Language Pathology Assessment Project (SPAP) located at the University of Georgia. As a part of the revision process, a statewide survey of all SLPs was conducted during the period of November, 1985 through February, 1986. Seven hundred eighty-eight SLPs working in 181 of Georgia's 187 school districts and 4 psychoeducational centers were asked to evaluate 99 competency statements on three dimensions: importance, frequency of use, and level of performance.

Five hundred sixty-eight (72%) of the surveys, representing 153 school districts and 3 psychoeducational centers, were returned; 564 surveys were subsequently tabulated. Of the 564 respondents, 144 had earned a bachelors degree, 410 had earned a masters degree, 8 held a specialists degree, and 1 reported having a doctorate. Two hundred seventy-one reported earning their degrees at an institution in Georgia while 290 received their degrees out-of-state. Sixty-six of the respondents were in their first year of employment in Georgia, while 243 had 1 to 5 years experience, 155 had 6-10 years of experience, and 100 had more than 10 years of experience.

Competencies, indicators, and descriptors were developed by the project staff using (1) the SLP survey statements which were judged to be essential in importance, sometimes to frequently used, and applicable to both beginning and experienced SLPs by 80% or more of the respondents, (2) information provided by the Regional Assessment Centers and (3) general comments/suggestions made throughout the project year. This draft of the revised SPAI was subsequently submitted to a review panel of SLPs.

The twelve-member SPAI Review Panel was composed of SLPs from various employment settings throughout the state whose responsibilities ranged from full-time direct services to full-time supervision of special education programs. The panel met twice during the first seven months of 1986, suggesting changes in some descriptors and indicators and writing key points for the descriptors. This draft of the SPAI is currently being field tested in several school districts throughout the State of Georgia.

Upon completion of the field-test activities, establishment of criterion ratings, and retraining of data collectors, the revised SPAI will be implemented in Georgia public schools for the 1987-88 school year.

SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT
COMPETENCIES AND INDICATORS

I. The SLP demonstrates program management skills.

A. Informs faculty of program services.
B. Develops work schedule(s) which will fit the needs of the student, school and faculty.
C. Maintains a physical environment conducive to learning.

II. The SLP uses screening and referral techniques.

A. Implements screening and/or referral procedures to identify students needing speech-language evaluation.
B. Follows through on referrals made to the program.
C. Makes referrals for further evaluations.

III. The SLP obtains and uses diagnostic information.

A. Obtains diagnostic information.
B. Obtains and uses information from co-workers and parents to assist with specific student problems.
C. Revises therapy as needed using evaluation results and observation data.

IV. The SLP plans for students and maintains records.

A. Develops long range goals for students.
B. Develops short term objectives for students.
C. Uses standard English when writing (legibility, spelling, punctuation, morphology, syntax, organization).
D. Records program and student information.

V. The SLP uses therapy approaches and materials.

A. Uses therapy approaches which meet individual student needs.
B. Implements therapy activities in a logical sequence.
C. Uses materials compatible with student age and student interest.

VI. The SLP stimulates and interacts with students to enhance student performance.

A. Provides stimuli or cues during therapy.
B. Reinforces student responses.
C. Obtains responses which allow for evaluation of student performance in therapy.

VII. The SLP uses therapy management skills.

A. Provides instructions and explanations which are understood by the student.
B. Provides motivating activities.
C. Records responses during diagnostic and therapy activities.
D. Reinforces and encourages the efforts of students to maintain involvement.

Table 1

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

GEORGIA TEACHER CERTIFICATION TESTING PROGRAM

Overall Results 1982 - May, 1986

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY
N = 655

STATUS	First Attempt	Second Attempt Cumulative	Third Attempt Cumulative	Fourth Attempt Cumulative	Five or More Attempts Cumulative
PASS	63% (414)	74.5% (488)	78.7% (516)	79.38% (520)	80% (524)
		11.3% (74)	4.2% (28)	.61% (4)	.61% (4)
FAIL	37% (241)	13.1% (86)	4.12% (27)	1.37% (9)	.15 (1)
		4.7% (31)	2.1% (14)	.61% (4)	
NO RETAKE	N/A	12.3% (81)	17.09% (112)	19.2% (126)	19.8% (130)
RETAKE PASS RATE	N/A	46%	51%	31%	80%
CUMULATIVE	N/A	75%	79%	79%	80%

Table 2

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

GEORGIA TEACHER CERTIFICATION TESTING PROGRAM

Results from Veteran SLPs 1982 -May, 1986

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY
N = 266

STATUS	First Attempt	Second Attempt Cumulative	Third Attempt Cumulative	Fourth Attempt Cumulative	Five or More Attempts Cumulative
PASS	74.4% (198)	84.2% (224)	84.9% (226)	85.7% (228)	
		9.7% (26)	.75% (2)	.75% (2)	
FAIL	25.6% (68)	4.8% (13)	1.5% (4)	0% (0)	
			2.6% (7)	.75% (2)	
NO RETAKE		10.9% (29)	13.5% (36)	14.2% (38)	
RETAKE PASS RATE	N/A	67%	33%	100%	
CUMULATIVE	N/A	84%	85%	86%	

Table 3

GEORGIA TEACHER CERTIFICATION TESTING PROGRAM
FIELD: SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY
ANALYSIS OF PASSING RATES BY DEGREE AND IN STATE/OUT-OF-STATE
INCLUDES INITIAL AND RETAKE RESULTS
FEBRUARY, 1984 - MAY, 1986

Test Administration: February 18, 1984

N=45	4 YR		5 YR		TOTAL	
Georgia	9	50%	3	75%	12	55%
Out-of-State	4	29%	6	67%	10	43%
Total	13	41%	9	69%	22	49%

Test Administration: May 19, 1984

N=52	4 YR		5 YR		Ph.D		TOTAL	
Georgia	7	44%	6	67%	---		13	52%
Out-of-State	6	35%	5	56%	1	100%	12	44%
Total	13	39%	11	61%	1	100%	25	48%

Test Administration: November 17, 1984

N=64	4 YR		5 YR		TOTAL	
Georgia	7	41%	5	56%	12	46%
Out-of-State	6	30%	14	78%	20	53%
Total	13	35%	19	70%	32	50%

Test Administration: February 16, 1985

N=45	4 YR		5 YR		TOTAL	
Georgia	5	38%	7	78%	12	55%
Out-of-State	3	20%	4	50%	7	30%
Total	8	29%	11	65%	19	42%

Test Administration: May 18, 1985

N=69	4 YR		5 YR		TOTAL	
Georgia	13	45%	7	64%	20	50%
Out-of-State	6	30%	7	78%	13	45%
Total	19	39%	14	70%	33	48%

Test Administration: September 7, 1985

N=51	4 YR		5 YR		TOTAL	
Georgia	6	33%	7	70%	13	46%
Out-of-State	5	55%	8	57%	13	57%
Total	11	41%	15	63%	26	51%

Test Administration: December 7, 1985

N=146	4 YR		5 YR		TOTAL	
Georgia	15	54%	26	84%	41	70%
Out-of-State	10	34%	42	72%	52	60%
Total	25	44%	68	76%	93	63%

Test Administration: March 1, 1986

N=132	4 YR		5 YR		TOTAL	
Georgia	15	75%	24	75%	39	75%
Out-of-State	18	51%	35	78%	53	66%
Total	33	60%	59	77%	92	70%

Test Administration: May 31, 1986

N=170	4 YR		5 YR		6 YR		TOTAL	
Georgia	17	63%	30	73%	1	100%	48	70%
Out-of-State	16	50%	58	85%	1	100%	75	74%
Total	33	56%	88	81%	2	100%	123	72%

Total of Test Administrations: February,1984 - May, 1986

N=772	4 YR		5 YR		6 YR		Ph.D		TOTAL	
Georgia	94	50%	115	74%	1	100%	---		210	61%
Out-of-State	74	39%	179	76%	1	100%	1	100%	255	59%
Total	168	45%	294	75%	2	100%	1	100%	465	60%

Table 4

PERCENT OF SLPS MASTERING A GIVEN NUMBER OF SPAI COMPETENCIES

FIRST ASSESSMENTS: FALL 1983 - FALL 1985

Total Number of Competencies Mastered	In-State/Out-of-State		Degree Level		In-State/Out-of-State + Degree Level				Total
	In (N=62)	Out (N=60)	4 Yr (N=76)	5 Yr (N=56)	4 Yr/In (N=37)	4 Yr/Out (N=33)	5 Yr/In (N=25)	5 Yr/Out (N=26)	(N=144)*
0	0%	2%	1%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	1%
1	2%	0%	1%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	2%
2	8%	8%	12%	4%	11%	12%	4%	4%	8%
3	6%	7%	9%	2%	11%	9%	0%	4%	6%
4	10%	10%	12%	7%	8%	15%	12%	4%	10%
5	11%	25%	18%	20%	14%	21%	8%	31%	17%
6	29%	15%	20%	21%	27%	15%	32%	15%	19%
7	34%	33%	26%	46%	27%	24%	44%	42%	37%

*Total N is greater than sum of catergories because demographic information was not available for all SLPs.